Nepali Pronunciation Framework (NPF)

A Structured, Bilingual Guide for English Pronunciation

Designed for Nepali Schools, Colleges, and Universities

Framework Developer: Lovedev Sharma
Role: BA-B.Ed 2024 Cohort Undergraduate Student
Institution: Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED)

Foreword / प्रस्तावना

English

English pronunciation remains one of the most challenging areas for Nepali learners. While grammar and vocabulary are often emphasized in classrooms, pronunciation is frequently left to imitation or guesswork. Moreover, most pronunciation resources available to Nepali students are either overly technical (IPA-heavy) or overly simplified (rule-based without context).

The **Nepali Pronunciation Framework (NPF)** is an attempt to bridge this gap. It is designed as a **localized, bilingual, and pedagogically informed framework** that respects both the structure of English phonology and the realities of Nepali classrooms. Rather than presenting pronunciation as a rigid system of rules, NPF introduces **patterns, tendencies, and awareness**, supported by Nepali explanations and carefully selected IPA symbols.

This framework is intended as a **starting point**, not a final authority. Its primary goal is to help learners listen better, predict pronunciation more confidently, and gradually move toward natural spoken English.

नेपाली

अंग्रेजी उच्चारण नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरूका लागि सधैं चुनौतीपूर्ण विषय रहँदै आएको छ। कक्षाकोठामा प्रायः grammar र vocabulary मा बढी ध्यान दिइन्छ, तर pronunciation लाई न त व्यवस्थित रूपमा पढाइन्छ न त स्पष्ट रूपमा बुझाइन्छ। उपलब्ध धेरै सामग्री या त अत्यन्तै प्राविधिक हुन्छन् (IPA मात्रै) वा अत्यन्तै सरल (rule मात्र, व्याख्या बिना)।

Nepali Pronunciation Framework (NPF) यही खालीपन पूर्ति गर्ने प्रयास हो। यो framework **नेपाली सन्दर्भमा आधारित, द्विभाषिक र शिक्षण दृष्टिले उपयुक्त** बनाइएको छ। यहाँ pronunciation लाई कडा नियमको रूपमा होइन, **ढाँचा, प्रवृत्ति र सचेतनाको अभ्यास** को रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ।

यो framework अन्तिम सत्य होइन, तर **सही दिशामा सुरु गर्ने आधार** हो। विद्यार्थीलाई राम्रोसँग सुन्न, उच्चारण अनुमान गर्न, र बिस्तारै प्राकृतिक अंग्रेजी बोल्न सहयोग गर्नु नै यसको मुख्य उद्देश्य हो।

Author's Note / लेखकको टिप्पणी

English

This framework is a result of my academic journey as a student of TESOL and my lived experience as a Nepali learner of English. Throughout my schooling and university life, I observed that many learners struggle with pronunciation not because of lack of effort, but because they are not provided with a **clear, contextualized, and learner-friendly system**.

The Nepali Pronunciation Framework was developed to respond to that gap. It intentionally avoids two extremes: overly technical phonetic theory and oversimplified rule memorization. Instead, it promotes **awareness, listening, and gradual control over sound patterns**, supported by Nepali explanations and selected IPA symbols.

I hope this framework will serve as a **practical starting point** for students and a **flexible teaching tool** for educators. It is not meant to replace dictionaries, teachers, or authentic listening—but to guide learners toward them with confidence.

नेपाली

यो framework मेरो TESOL अध्ययन यात्रा र एक नेपाली अंग्रेजी विद्यार्थीको अनुभवको परिणाम हो। मैले आफ्नो अध्ययनकालमा धेरै विद्यार्थीहरूलाई pronunciation मा संघर्ष गरिरहेको देखेँ—तर त्यो उनीहरूको मेहनतको कमीका कारण होइन, **सही र बुझ्न मिल्ने प्रणालीको अभाव** का कारण थियो।

Nepali Pronunciation Framework यही समस्याको उत्तर हो। यसले pronunciation लाई न त अत्यन्तै प्राविधिक बनाउँछ, न त केवल rule याद गर्ने विषय। बरु, यसले **सुन्ने क्षमता, ढाँचा बुझ्ने अभ्यास र sound प्रति सचेतना** विकास गर्न मद्दत गर्छ।

म आशा गर्छु कि यो framework विद्यार्थीहरूका लागि **आत्मविश्वासका साथ सुरु गर्ने आधार** र शिक्षकहरूका लागि **लचिलो शिक्षण उपकरण** बन्न सकोस्।

1. Introduction / परिचय

English

English pronunciation is not governed by strict rules; rather, it follows **patterns and tendencies** developed through history, stress, and usage. Nepali learners often struggle because English spelling does not consistently reflect sound. This framework provides a **systematic, learner-friendly entry point** to English pronunciation while honestly acknowledging exceptions.

This framework is intended for:

- Secondary school students
- Beginner and lower-intermediate university students
- Teachers seeking a structured pronunciation model for Nepali classrooms

नेपाली

अंग्रेजी उच्चारण कडा नियमहरूमा होइन, **ढाँचाहरू (patterns)** मा आधारित हुन्छ। अंग्रेजी spelling र sound सधैं मिल्दैनन्, जसका कारण नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरूलाई उच्चारण गाह्रो लाग्छ।

यो **Nepali Pronunciation Framework (NPF)** अंग्रेजी उच्चारण सिक्न चाहने विद्यार्थीहरूका लागि **सुरुवाती, व्यवस्थित र व्यवहारिक मार्गदर्शन** हो।

2. Pedagogical Principle / शिक्षण आधार

English

- These are **tendencies, not laws**.
- Rules help learners **predict pronunciation**, not guarantee it.
- Listening and repetition are essential.

नेपाली

- यी नियमहरू **धेरैजसो अवस्थामा मिल्छन्**, तर सबैमा होइनन्।
- Rule ले अनुमान गर्न मद्दत गर्छ, पूर्ण सत्य होइन।
- राम्रो उच्चारण **सुन्ने र नक्कल गर्ने अभ्यास** बाट आउँछ।

3. Short Vowel Framework / छोटो स्वर ढाँचा

Rule 1: Vowel + Double Consonant → Short Vowel

English Explanation

When a vowel is followed by two consonants in a stressed syllable, the vowel sound is usually short.

नेपाली व्याख्या

यदि एउटै syllable मा vowel पछाडि दुई consonant आए भने vowel प्रायः **छोटो उच्चारण** हुन्छ।

Examples:

- *A* → /æ/: bag, cat, fan, map, black
- *E* → /e/: pen, bed, desk, bell

- *I* → /ɪ/: sit, fish, milk, pin
- *O* → /ɒ/: hot, box, dog, lock
- *U* → /ʌ/: cup, bus, sun, luck

Common Mistake (Nepali Learners):

- *cat* = क्याट ✔ (काट **X**)

Exceptions:

- father, calm (stress and history change sound)

4. Long Vowel (Magic E) Framework / लामो स्वर (Silent E)

Rule 2: Silent ‘E’ makes the vowel long

English Explanation
When a word ends with a silent ‘e’, the vowel before it is usually pronounced long.

नेपाली व्याख्या
शब्दको अन्त्यमा ‘e’ आए पनि त्यो बोलिँदैन, तर अगाडिको vowel लामो हुन्छ।

Examples:

- make, cake, name → /eɪ/
- time, line, fine → /aɪ/
- hope, note, home → /oʊ/
- use, tube → /juː/

Exceptions:

- have, give, come (silent e भए पनि vowel लामो हुँदैन)

5. Double Vowel Patterns / दोहोरो स्वर ढाँचा

Rule 3: EE → /iː/

Explanation (EN): EE generally produces a long /iː/ sound.

व्याख्या (NE): EE देखिँदा प्रायः ‘ई’ उच्चारण हुन्छ।

Examples: see, meet, green, sleep, tree

Exception: been → /bɪn/

Rule 4: EA → Mostly /iː/

Examples: eat, beat, meat, speak, teach

Exceptions:

- /e/: head, bread, dead
- /eɪ/: great, break

Nepali Tip: EA धोकेबाज vowel हो—ध्यान दिएर सुन्नुहोस्।

Rule 5: AI / AY → /eɪ/

Examples: rain, pain, train, day, play, stay

Exception: said → /sed/

6. R-Controlled Vowels / R ले बदल्ने स्वर

Rule 6: AR → /ɑːr/

car, park, dark, farm, start

Exception: war → /wɔːr/

Rule 7: ER / IR / UR → /ɜːr/

her, bird, girl, turn, burn

Nepali Note: spelling फरक भए पनि sound एउटै हुन्छ।

Rule 8: OR → /ɔːr/

for, more, door, floor

Exceptions: word, work → /ɜːr/

7. Special Letter Combinations / विशेष संयोजन

Rule 9: AW / AU → /ɔː/

law, saw, caught, cause, daughter

Exception: laugh → /æf/

Rule 10: AL + L → /ɔːl/

all, call, fall, wall, small

Rule 11: A before ST / SK / SP → /ɑː/

past, task, fast, ask, mask

Exception: has → /æ/

8. Y as a Vowel / Y स्वरको रूपमा

Rule 12: Y at word end

- /i/: happy, city, baby
- /aɪ/: my, fly, sky

9. Weak Vowel (Schwa) Awareness / कमजोर स्वर (Schwa)

Rule 13: Unstressed vowels become /ə/

Examples:

- about → /əˈbaʊt/
- teacher → /ˈtiːtʃər/
- banana → /bəˈnɑːnə/

Nepali Instruction:
सबै vowel जोडले नबोल्ने। Stress भएको syllable मात्र बलियो हुन्छ।

10. Introduction to IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) / IPA को परिचय

Purpose of IPA in this Framework / IPA किन आवश्यक छ?

English Explanation:
English spelling is unreliable for pronunciation. IPA provides a **standard sound system** so that one symbol represents one sound. This framework introduces **selected IPA symbols only**, suitable for Nepali learners at secondary and beginner university level.

नेपाली व्याख्या:
अंग्रेजी spelling ले सही उच्चारण देखाउँदैन। त्यसैले IPA प्रयोग गरिन्छ, जहाँ **एक symbol = एक sound** हुन्छ। यहाँ पूर्ण IPA होइन, **Nepali विद्यार्थीलाई आवश्यक पर्ने मुख्य sound मात्र** समावेश गरिएको छ।

10.1 English Vowel Sounds (IPA with Nepali Reference)

Short Vowels / छोटो स्वर

IPA Symbol	English Example	Nepali Approximation	Note
/ɪ/	sit, fish	इ	*seat* होइन *sit*
/e/	pen, bed	ए	*pain* सँग नझुक्याउनु
/æ/	cat, man	क्य	नेपालीमा exact sound छैन
/ʌ/	cup, sun	अ	*put* भन्दा फरक
/ɒ/	hot, box	अ / आ	British sound बढी

Long Vowels / लामो स्वर

IPA Symbol	English Example	Nepali Approximation	Note
/iː/	see, meet	ई	लामो, तान्ने
/ɑː/	car, past	आ	मुख ठूलो खोल्ने
/ɔː/	law, call	ऑ	गोलो ओ
/uː/	food, moon	ऊ	तानिएको उ
/ɜː/	bird, turn	अः	नेपालीमा छैन

10.2 English Diphthongs (Gliding Vowels) / दुई स्वर मिसिएको sound

IPA	Example	Nepali Guide
/eɪ/	day, make	ए → इ
/aɪ/	time, my	आ → इ
/oʊ/	go, home	ओ → उ
/aʊ/	now, cow	आ → उ
/ɔɪ/	boy, coin	ऑ → इ

Nepali Instruction:
यी sound हरू **एकै ठाउँमा रोकिन्न**, बग्दै जान्छन्।

10.3 Important Consonant Sounds (Problem Sounds for Nepali Learners)

IPA	Word	Nepali Issue	Instruction
/θ/	think	थ	जिब्रो दाँत बीच
/ð/	this	द	soft बोल्ने
/v/	very	भ / ब	ओठ र दाँत
/w/	water	व	गोलो ओठ
/z/	zoo	ज	आवाजसहित
/ʃ/	ship	श	शुद्ध श
/ʒ/	measure	ज	नेपालीमा छैन

10.4 The Schwa /ə/ (Most Important Sound in English)

What is Schwa? / Schwa के हो?

English Explanation:
Schwa /ə/ is the most common vowel sound in spoken English. It appears in **unstressed syllables**, meaning syllables that are not spoken strongly. Schwa is **short, weak, and relaxed**. Mastery of schwa is essential for natural and fluent English pronunciation.

नेपाली व्याख्या:
Schwa (/ə/) अंग्रेजी भाषाको सबैभन्दा धेरै प्रयोग हुने स्वर हो। यो **stress नपरेको syllable** मा आउँछ। Schwa **छोटो, कमजोर र सजिलो** उच्चारण हुन्छ। Schwa नबुझेसम्म अंग्रेजी उच्चारण प्राकृतिक सुनिँदैन।

Nepali Approximation of Schwa / नेपाली उच्चारण सहयोग

Schwa को नेपाली नजिकको उच्चारण:

- **अ** (तर धेरै हल्का)
- बोल्दा मुख धेरै नखोल्ने
- जोड नदिने

☞ *Schwa = हल्का "अ" जस्तो sound*

Examples of Schwa in Words / शब्दमा Schwa

Word	IPA	Nepali-style Pronunciation

about	/əˈbaʊt/	अबाउट (अ- कमजोर)
banana	/bəˈnɑːnə/	बनाना (पहिलो र अन्तिम अ कमजोर)
teacher	/ˈtiːtʃər/	टीचर (अन्त्यको अ कमजोर)
support	/səˈpɔːrt/	सपोर्ट
problem	/ˈprɒbləm/	प्रब्लम

Why Schwa is Difficult for Nepali Learners / किन Schwa गाह्रो हुन्छ?

English:
Nepali learners tend to pronounce **every vowel clearly and strongly**, which makes English sound unnatural.

नेपाली:
नेपाली भाषामा प्रायः सबै vowel स्पष्ट बोलिन्छन्। त्यसैले विद्यार्थीहरूले अंग्रेजीमा पनि सबै vowel जोडले बोल्ने बानी हुन्छ, जुन natural English होइन।

Classroom Instruction (Very Important) / कक्षा निर्देशन

- Do NOT pronounce every vowel strongly
- Stress only the important syllable
- Let other vowels become weak (schwa)

नेपालीमा:

- सबै vowel जोडले नबोल्ने
- मुख्य syllable मात्र जोड दिने
- बाँकी vowel लाई schwa बनाउने

Teacher Reminder / शिक्षकका लागि सन्देश

If students learn schwa early, their pronunciation improves faster than learning many rules.

Schwa is not laziness; it is natural English.

11. Silent Letters / नबोलिने अक्षर

Rule 14: GH

- silent: night, light
- /f/: laugh, cough

Rule 15: K before N

know, knife, knee

Rule 16: B after M

comb, thumb, climb

11. Conclusion / निष्कर्ष

English

The Nepali Pronunciation Framework is not an end point but a **starting structure**. With continuous listening, practice, and exposure, learners gradually move from rule-based pronunciation to natural speech.

नेपाली

यो Framework अन्तिम सत्य होइन, तर **सुरुवात गर्ने बलियो आधार** हो। निरन्तर अभ्यास, सुन्ने बानी र नक्कलले नै वास्तविक सुधार ल्याउँछ।

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English

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नेपाली

यो framework लेखकको मौलिक बौद्धिक कृति हो। यसलाई **शैक्षिक तथा गैर-व्यावसायिक प्रयोजन** का लागि विद्यालय, कलेज, विश्वविद्यालय तथा शिक्षक तालिममा प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ, तर लेखकको नाम उल्लेख गर्नुपर्नेछ।

लेखकको अनुमति बिना यसलाई व्यावसायिक रूपमा पुनःप्रकाशन, परिवर्तन वा वितरण गर्न पाइने छैन।

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